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North Ward Educational and Cultural Center, Inc.



The Challenge

Newark, New Jersey, the largest city in the most urban state in the nation, has a demographic balance of 65% black, 10% hispanic and 25% white ethnic. The unique dynamic of whites occupying a position as a minority presents a challenge for human values and understanding. The real challenge we face today is the future of our cities. As Newark's Black Mayor Kenneth Gibson noted on his election in 1970, "Wherever the cities are going, Newark will get there first." Urban policy social scientists. and developers in the 1960's saw the plight of the inner cities but paid little attention to the relatively stable working class and lower middle class neighborhoods that provided a homeowner tax base for the city. These neighborprimarily ethnic working class character, are a prime source of a neighborhood stabilization agenda for our cities. Neighborhood stabilization requires a shift on the part of planners and others involved in policy decisions on the future of the city to see ethnic working class communities as part of the solution rather than part of the problem of the urban equation.

The Response

In 1970 an organization was formed in Newark, New Jersey to develop a national model of community development, social service delivery, and development of human values and understanding. With the assistance of Msgr. Geno Baroni and the Center for Urban Ethnic Affairs in Washington, D.C., Stephen Adubato formed a non-profit corporation, the North Ward Educational and Cultural Center. to institute stablization efforts and program development within the ethnic working class community of the North Ward of Newark. Developing indigenous, creative community leadership, the NWECC has worked in coalition with black leadership in Newark to bring the ethnic working class community in contact with the needed service programs to stabilize and buttress the traditional family structure. More than fifteen social service programs are offered at the Center ranging from early childhood development to senior citizens. A recent program includes a freshman year at the local Essex County College within the neighborhood setting. Programs in social services endeavor to provide a stable neighborhood through meeting community needs.

The Achievement

The NWECC has as its goal the stabilizaton of the white ethnic community of Newark, New Jersey as a cornerstone for the maintenance of a multi-ethnic, pluralistic city. The NWECC sees these efforts as a model for the future direction of our major cities. The follow-up of the Kerner Commission report by the Urban Coalition states that by the end of the 1970's, more than 20 cities will have the experience of Newark. Stabilizing a white minority community as a dimension in a majority Black city requires a recognition of the unique cultural needs of the white ethnic community. In Newark, working closely with the Black administration, the NWECC has achieved a new model of interaction between a white ethnic minority and a Black majority.

As we look toward the end of the 1970's, the experience of Newark may well be a model for other cities throughout the nation. If we are to find a solution for our cities, part of the response must be the recognition of the legitimate needs and aspirations of the ethnic working class community.

A BICENTENNIAL PROGRAM JOINTLY SPONSORED BY THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION BICENTENNIAL ADMINISTRATION AND THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

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